

# The Barclay School

Walkern Road, Stevenage SG1 3RB

## Inspection dates

5–6 July 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
16 to 19 study programmes	Require improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Outcomes are inadequate. In many subjects, teaching is not yet good enough to enable pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Until recently, leaders have been overgenerous in evaluating the quality of teaching and in assessing pupils' progress. As a result, there has been too little improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should. This is because their individual needs have not been met well enough in too many subjects.
- Gaps in achievement between pupils who are disadvantaged and their peers are too wide and are not closing quickly.
- Teachers' use of assessment to inform their planning is not good enough. Consequently, learning is not well enough matched to pupils' needs. This slows the progress that pupils make.
- Until very recently, subject leaders have not been effective in strengthening key aspects of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result there is still too much weak teaching.
- Attendance overall has improved but remains too low for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Sixth form teaching requires improvement because teachers do not structure their teaching well enough to meet the needs of different learners.

### The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed headteacher has a clear understanding of what needs to improve. She has quickly established a culture of high expectations and has prioritised necessary changes.
- Pastoral leadership is effective; pupils are safe in school, feel well cared for by staff and conduct themselves well around the site.
- Governors have recently established strong external partnerships to strengthen governance. These have ensured that they now have more accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that teachers use the information they have about pupils' prior learning to plan lessons that meet the pupils' different aptitudes, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
  - effectively implementing recent changes in the mathematics curriculum to quickly build the pupils' mathematical understanding and skills.
- Raise outcomes for pupils, including in the sixth form, by:
  - persistently and consistently applying the recently introduced strategies for raising the attendance of all pupils, but especially of those whose absence rates are high
  - accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics across all year groups
  - ensuring that teachers in the sixth form meet the needs of students who are at different stages in their learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - evaluating rigorously the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that rapid improvements can be made across all subjects
  - ensuring that the new leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils evaluates the effectiveness of pupil premium funding and implements strategies that quickly close the achievement gap; the evaluation of pupil premium funding should appear on the school's website
  - providing further training and support for the new leader for special educational needs (SENCo) so that teachers understand pupils' specific needs and make suitable provision for them in lessons.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leadership under the new headteacher has been suitably galvanised to focus on making necessary improvements, but leaders have not yet done enough to strengthen provision. Too many pupils underachieved in 2015, particularly in mathematics and English, and there is little sign that things have improved this year. Recent changes have not had time to make up for teaching that has been poor or disrupted in the past, and outcomes remain inadequate.
- Governors acknowledge that the inadequate outcomes in 2015 came as a surprise. This is because, at that time, teachers and leaders did not have an accurate enough understanding of the quality of teaching or how well pupils were achieving. They were consequently slow to take effective action to improve poor teaching, and too many weaknesses remain.
- Subject leaders have not carried out their roles effectively and have failed to address underachievement. They have not ensured that teachers use assessment information well. This has resulted in too much poorly planned learning which has not met the needs of pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have not previously evaluated how well the use of additional government funding is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. As a consequence, pupils have not had effective support and have made too little progress. The headteacher recently commissioned a review of the impact of pupil premium spending. Since then, new actions are improving the attendance for these pupils, but they are too recent to have had an impact on achievement.
- Provision for special educational needs is not good enough because teachers are not provided with accurate information about the precise needs of these pupils. As a result, they do not use effective strategies to help pupils learn well. The new SENCo is monitoring and evaluating more closely, but changes have not had enough time to enable pupils to make better progress.
- The headteacher has quickly created an open and collaborative approach and is building a stronger leadership and teaching team. She has raised expectations and this is improving standards of attendance, uniform and conduct around school because all the staff are working together to enforce the new standards.
- The headteacher has rightly prioritised raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and has challenged teaching that is not good enough. The newly created teaching and learning team is beginning to have an impact on improving weaknesses in teaching.
- School leaders are taking effective action to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment of pupils' learning. Quality assurance now ensures that internal examinations are fit for purpose. School leaders are working successfully in partnership with an outstanding school, and the local authority, and this has now improved the accuracy of assessment.
- The curriculum for English has improved since the last inspection, but it remains weak for mathematics and science. The newly appointed mathematics subject leader has introduced new and effective approaches to strengthen the mathematics curriculum, but this has yet to have an impact on pupils' progress. Senior leaders have increased the time available to teach these subjects. As a result, key stage 3 pupils are starting to make better progress.

- The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, with strengths in modern foreign languages, expressive arts and religious education. The extra-curricular offer is varied. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities including an exciting go-karting programme, sporting clubs and creative activities such as pottery. A large number of pupils take part in these activities and they grow in confidence as a result of participating in them.
- Pupils receive careers guidance in all years, with a targeted interview for all Year 11 and Year 13 pupils. This results in almost all Year 11 pupils making confident decisions about the next stage of their education. However, outcomes in both English and mathematics limit the routes open to some pupils who have not achieved well enough. Too few pupils fulfil their potential for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of life in modern Britain. They have regular opportunities to take part in different activities that develop their understanding of tolerance and democracy. For example, they hold a number of different elections.
- Some pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop confidence in managing their own learning. As a result they are not fully prepared for the challenges of the sixth form at the school or elsewhere because their study skills are not developed adequately.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors jointly lead the federation of Almond Hill Junior School and Barclay School and have a strategic vision to create a high-quality all-through education provision for the local community.
  - Until recently, the governing body has not been sufficiently well informed about the quality of provision and standards at the school. Governors have taken action with the new headteacher, the local authority and other leaders to ensure that their understanding of pupils' progress is now accurate and externally validated. They are monitoring this carefully.
  - Governors have supported the headteacher in the changes that she is making so that leadership throughout the school can bring about the improvements needed. They have identified an outstanding school to support their work. This has led to a strong partnership that is supporting the headteacher to challenge poor performance and to make the necessary changes.
  - Governors have ensured that their training in safeguarding, safer recruitment and anti-radicalisation is up to date. Governors have managed a challenging financial climate well and resourced the school's new staffing structure.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The governing body is well trained in safeguarding and holds leaders to account for ensuring that the school complies with statutory requirements. The designated governor undertakes a termly check of safeguarding documents, raising any issues appropriately. Parents overwhelmingly agree that their children are safe. There are robust procedures to manage medical issues; a school nurse ensures appropriate care for pupils. Leaders have improved the safeguarding procedures for pupils who attend alternative educational provision for part of their curriculum. These are now effective.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- Teaching is inadequate because too much is ineffective. Teachers do not use information about what pupils are able to do to make sure that learning activities meet their needs. Too often, insufficient challenge and support in lessons means that pupils

do not make the progress they are capable of. Teaching does not adequately meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

- Leaders acknowledge that the quality of teaching in recent years has not been good enough. Improvements are happening, but these are not fast enough to make sure that pupils in key stage 4 make up lost ground.
- Some teachers do not consistently apply the school's feedback policy across subjects and year groups. Therefore, pupils are unclear about how to make improvements to their work. For example, in English too many pupils do not receive clear guidance on what they need to do next to correct and improve their work. This leads to mistakes being repeated and misconceptions uncorrected.
- Teachers of mathematics have not ensured that pupils master the key building blocks they need to understand a concept before moving on. As a result, many pupils are unable to apply their learning to solve mathematical problems.
- In too many lessons, where the teaching does not interest or enthuse pupils, a minority lose interest and disrupt the learning of others. This is particularly the case in mixed-ability and middle-ability sets.
- Teachers' assessment has improved because of the training and support that they have received from school leaders and external partners. They are now able to see clearly how well pupils are progressing but they are not using this information well enough to plan progression in pupils' learning.
- Some teachers provide well for the most able pupils. Expectations are high and they plan learning that stretches and challenges their thinking. For example, in history the most able pupils were encouraged to challenge each other's understanding as they discussed source material about the Cuban missile crisis. As a result of the teacher's skilful questioning pupils demonstrated exemplary attitudes to learning and made good progress.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils show what they are capable of achieving, for instance in music, modern foreign languages and expressive arts. In these subjects, learning is well planned to challenge pupils of different abilities. For example, in a music lesson pupils were given three levels of challenge in their learning and were confident to take risks and stretch themselves. This led to rapid pupil progress.
- Teachers ensure that pupils read, write and communicate at an appropriate level in many lessons. For example, regular reading lessons take place in the library. Teachers monitor improvements in pupils' reading ages and provide support where necessary. Consequently, pupils' reading ages show steady improvement in key stage 3.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strongest in key stage 3 because the recently appointed headteacher has raised the expectations of pupils and staff. As a result, these pupils make improved progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils do not develop as confident and self-assured learners. This means that they are not well enough prepared, as they complete key stage 4, to be able to take actions to improve their learning without extensive guidance from their teachers. This reduces their ability to be successful in the next phase of their education or training, including

their sixth form studies.

- Pupils explained that bullying is a rare occurrence and that they are confident that when it does happen, staff would resolve issues swiftly. Incidents of bullying are monitored carefully and records show that it rarely happens.
- Pupils respect the school environment; there is little litter or graffiti.
- The arrangements made between the school and local providers ensure that the needs of a small proportion of pupils educated away from the school site are met. This results in their good attendance and preparation for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' personal development is enhanced in assemblies, tutor time and designated personal, social and health education lessons. Teachers introduce topics that encourage pupils to actively explore their understanding. Pupils speak enthusiastically about these lessons and the extensive choice of extra-curricular activities on offer to them.
- Pupils know how to keep safe in a variety of settings. They value the opportunities they have at social times to mix together with their peer group. They have been taught strategies on how to be safe when using the internet. For example, key stage 3 pupils could describe how to block unwelcome people on social media and how to report incidents to internet service providers.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils say that they experience low-level disruption in some classes because some pupils cannot understand the tasks set by teachers and need more help. Inspectors also saw evidence of this in some lessons and assemblies. In the majority of instances, incidences of low-level disruption were managed effectively using the school's behaviour strategies.
- Leaders have significantly reduced the incidents of more serious poor behaviour. In the last year the rates of internal isolation and fixed-term exclusion have been reduced by half. This is because the teachers are more rigorous in implementing the school behaviour and rewards policy and they correct poor behaviour at an early stage.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is orderly. They arrive punctually to lessons and are equipped for learning. They are welcoming to visitors and show good manners when speaking with them.
- Attendance remains below the national average. In all year groups, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is too low. Leaders have now put in place effective strategies to address this and attendance for all groups is improving rapidly.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **are inadequate**

- Outcomes are inadequate because too many pupils do not make the progress expected of them across a range of subjects. This is the case in key stage 4, particularly in mathematics, English literature, history and technology. Conversely, pupils make good progress in biology, chemistry, physics and physical education.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including in English and mathematics was very low, and well below the school's own predictions. Assessment information supports leaders' expectations that outcomes in many subjects will improve this year, but will remain low due to the disrupted teaching that pupils have experienced in the past.
- Outcomes in mathematics were too low in 2015 and remain inadequate across key stage 4. Pupils have, in the past, experienced too many changes of teacher and poor

teaching that has not been challenged robustly enough by leaders. Although leadership of the subject has improved recently, pupils' current progress, particularly in key stage 4, remains below that expected.

- Outcomes in English language have improved since the last inspection. They are now in line with the national average.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is inadequate. There are significant gaps between their achievement and that of their peers. These gaps are not closing swiftly enough. Leaders recognise that gaps are too wide and are re-allocating pupil premium funding to support pupils in a range of different ways. However, these improvements have not had time to have sufficient impact on the progress these pupils make.
- The outcomes for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are low and are not improving swiftly enough. This is because teachers do not plan learning that is accurately matched to their needs.
- The most able pupils make progress in line with national averages in mathematics and English. They are well challenged and teachers have high expectations of them. As a result, the proportion who achieve at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including in English and mathematics is in line with that of their peers nationally.
- Individual case studies for pupils educated away from the school site show that they re-engage in learning and achieve well.
- New staffing arrangements and subject leadership in a number of curriculum areas are having a positive impact on outcomes. The standards in many subjects are improving this year; this is most evident in key stage 3 and in English language in key stage 4.

### 16 to 19 study programmes

### require improvement

- Outcomes in the sixth form are not yet good. In 2015, achievement was below national averages at both A and AS level. Students who took vocational qualifications achieved better outcomes, above national expectations. Evidence shows that the outcomes of students taking academic qualifications in 2016 will remain low.
- Teaching in the sixth form requires improvement because some teachers do not plan learning well enough to meet the needs of different students. Assessment practice is not consistent or reliable across all the providers in the sixth form consortium, and underachievement is not identified quickly enough.
- Leadership in the sixth form is improving. Senior leaders are beginning to monitor the quality of teaching and learning by conducting lesson observations with the head of sixth form. Leaders regularly monitor the students' achievement and accurately identify where they are falling behind. They use this information to decide what additional support needs to be provided to help them catch up.
- A sixth form consortium across Stevenage ensures that students are offered a wide choice of subjects to meet the needs of most learners. Students who have not previously gained a grade C in mathematics and English at GCSE level are given the opportunity to study and re-sit examinations. All of them were successful in achieving a grade C in English. In mathematics, half of those entered gained a C grade.
- Leaders ensure that students are well placed to make informed decisions about their futures because they undertake work experience and receive impartial careers advice from an external provider. This is complemented by each student being allocated a trained academic mentor. This results in a high number of Year 12 students moving into Year 13 and a larger than average proportion of students progressing to higher

education, further training or employment.

- Students say that the sixth form is a safe place and that bullying is very rare. Assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons help them to improve their understanding of how to be safe and prepare for life in modern Britain. For example, leadership opportunities include becoming a senior prefect or acting as a mentor for the younger pupils.
- Leaders monitor attendance and punctuality closely and contact parents and carers promptly if their child misses a lesson across all of the consortium's sites. Students conduct themselves well and are positive role models for pupils in the rest of the school.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117515
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001898
This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.	
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	891
<b>Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes</b>	119
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nicky Clarke
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqui O'Connor
<b>Telephone number</b>	01438 232 221
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.barclayschool.co.uk">www.barclayschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@barclay.herts.sch.uk">admin@barclay.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11–12 December 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is governed jointly as part of the Stevenage Inspire Federation with Almond Hill Junior School.
- The school is an averaged sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- The proportion of girls is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding to support particular groups of pupils) is average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of these pupils with a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- A small number of pupils are enrolled in alternative provision at North Hertfordshire Educational Support Centre and Stevenage Education Support Centre.
- Collaborative arrangements for sixth form provision are in place, involving other secondary schools in Stevenage.
- The Hertfordshire and Essex High School is commissioned to support school improvement.

- The school does not meet requirements to publish on its website the impact of additional government funding for literacy catch-up or the effectiveness of individual provision for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school did not meet current government floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in 36 lessons, five of which were seen jointly with a senior leader. In addition, several short visits were made to a range of lessons. Inspectors spoke by phone to leaders of alternative providers used by the school.
- At the time of inspection, pupils in Years 11, 12 and 13 were involved in public examinations so it was not possible to observe the full range of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior, subject and other leaders. Inspectors met three groups of pupils and a group of sixth form students.
- Inspectors met the chair and six members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised data about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, reviewed minutes of meetings of the governing body, and scrutinised pupils' work in lessons.

## Inspection team

Simon Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Cox

Ofsted Inspector

Shan Oswald

Ofsted Inspector

Bruce Clark

Ofsted Inspector

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